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A

TREATISE

OF

Human Reaſon.

By *M. CLIFFORD*,
Sometime Maſter of the *Charter-Houſe*.

The Third EDITION.

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LONDON:
Printed for J. ROBERTS, in Warwick-Lane; and J. STONE, in Bedford-Row, near Gray's-Inn.
Price One Shilling.

M.DCC.XXXVI.

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A

TREATISE

ON

Human Reaſon.

BEING reſolv'd, according to the Duty of every private Perſon, to make a Search into the Nature and Quality of my Religion; and according to my Intereſt in Human Society, to communicate the Effects of that Search to others, if I ſhall believe it profitable for them: I am in the firſt Place to conſider of the Choice of ſome Guide, for ſo long and ſo dangerous a Journey, where I

ſhall ſometimes meet with no Tract or Path at all, and ſometimes with ſo many, and theſe ſo contrary in the Appearance of their firſt Entry, that the Variety will confound me more than the Want; eſpecially there being ſo many Miſts caſt before me, by the Errors and Deceits of others, that one had great Need of a better Eyeſight than is left us by the Fall of our Firſt Forefather. And this Conſideration, after a long and ſerious Debate thereof, brings no other Guide to me but my own *Reaſon*, which if it take ſuch Directions, as it ought and may do, before it ſets forth, and purſue thoſe Directions with Care and Conſtancy, though it may poſſibly lead me into Errors, yet will bring me at laſt even through them, to the propoſed End of my Journey, which is *Happineſs*.

I am not ignorant of the many Enemies I muſt meet with in this Doctrine, but am fortified againſt them with the Thought that they who diſpute moſt againſt the Power and Privileges of *Human Reaſon*, do it becauſe their own Reaſon perſuades them to that Belief; and ſo whether the Victory be o' mine, or o' their Side, are equally defeated. They ſeek to terrify us with the Example of many excellent Wits, who, they ſay, by following this *Ignis fatuus* (for ſo they call the only *North-Star* which God has given us for the right ſteering of our Courſe) have fallen into wild

and

and ridiculous Opinions, and increaſed the Catalogue of Hereſies to ſo vaſt a Number: But truly theſe Men either followed not their own Reaſon, but made it follow their Will; or hood-wink'd it firſt by Intereſt and Prejudices, and then bad it ſhew them the Way; or were wanting in thoſe neceſſary Diligences which are required for ſo doubtful and dangerous a Paſſage: Or if without the Commiſſion of any of theſe Faults, the Weakneſs of their Underſtanding has deceiv'd them, the Error is neither hurtful to themſelves, nor would be to others, if this Doctrine of governing ourſelves from within, and not by Example, were eſtabliſh'd. Whereas on the contrary Side, the ſubmitting our Judgments to Authority, or any Thing elſe whatſoever, gives Univerſality and Perpetuity to every Error.

They fall naturally from hence into the large Common-Place of the Frailty, Uncertainty, and Diſproportion of our Underſtanding to divine and celeſtial Notions, and are eloquent herein with much of Truth. For when we ſay that every Man's Soul hath in itſelf as much Light as is requiſite for our Travel towards Heaven, we do not therefore aſſume, that it is as clear as thoſe Spirits which are confeſſed to be all a Flame. And for the Unaptneſs of it to receive the Impreſſion of Spiritual Truths; though the *What* and the

How

How of Religious Myſteries be out of Sight, yet that they are ſuch, is ſufficiently viſible. Eſpecially if we uſe thoſe Helps which God has prepared for us to that Purpoſe, and thoſe our Reaſon will dictate to herſelf that ſhe is to uſe. The ordinary Saying of *Democritus*, that *Truth lies in the Bottom of a deep Well*, is very applicable to this Matter: That is, that we muſt ſeek it in the Center and Heart of ourſelves, and not look up into Heaven firſt and immediately for it; becauſe by this Means we ſhall ſee Heaven in the Bottom of the Well, though we could not the Well in the Top of Heaven.

But the chief and moſt tragical Argument againſt us is, that the Allowance of this Liberty to particular Mens Diſcourſes, would beget as many Religions as there are ſeveral Perſons; and conſequently draw after it ſuch Diſorder and Confuſion, as is inconſiſtent not only with the Quiet, but the very Being of Human Society. This is a weighty and grievous Accuſation: and if our Reaſon be convinced of ſo harmful a Madneſs, it will be found neceſſary to keep it chain'd and fetter'd, and as much in the Dark as may be. But I hope it will acquit itſelf. Who knows not that the Philoſophy of the Ancients ſeparated itſelf into ſundry Parties; the *Pythagorians*, the *Peripateticks*, the *Stoicks*, the *Sceptick*s, the *Academicks*, (and theſe of

three

three Sorts) the *Epicureans*, the *Cynicks*, with many others; and these differ'd not in slight and verbal Controversies, but in the last Ends of Human Actions, in the Nature of Good and Evil, nay of God himself; whether Man worked freely or were compelled by an inevitable Necessity? Whether the Soul were subject to Corruption, or immaterial and immortal? Whether the World had a Beginning, or had endured from all Eternity? Whether the Gods took upon them the Government of Things below, or sat as idle themselves in Heaven as their Images were here on Earth? With divers other Questions of equal Consequence. These Opinions divided the Philosophers, and the Philosophers the People; nor were there fewer Sects in *Athens*, than are now in *Amsterdam* or *London*. And yet this Variety of Opinion neither begat any Civil War in *Greece*, neither did the *Peripateticks* (when both by the Strength of their Arguments and their Emperor, that Party was become the greatest) set up any Inquisition, or High Commission or Committee against the Rest; but every Man enjoyed his Opinion with more Safety and Freedom, than either his Goods or Wife. The same likewise happened in the Religions of the Ancients; for though several Cities profess'd the Worship of several Deities, yet we read not of any War which hath sprung from that Diversity. The Poets have made the

the Gods enter into Factions and Quarrels for Commonwealths, but Commonwealths never did the same for their Gods. This Quiet and Happiness, which (to the Shame and Scandal of the Christian Name) was enjoyed Four Thousand Years among the Heathen, continued so long and so uninterrupted, because every Man, following the Rules of his own Judgment, allowed that Liberty to others, which he found so necessary for himself. And even the *Stoicks* themselves, who enslaved the Will, durst never attempt this Violence to the Understanding.

From whence then shall we say it proceeds, that since the Reformation open'd a Way to this Freedom of Conscience, so much Blood and Confusion and almost Desolation, has followed in all those Countries which admitted it? *Germany*, *France*, the *Low-Countries*, and *Scotland* are sufficient Witnesses of this; and I could wish that miserable *England* had not been added to the Number of these sad Examples. But certainly, since this Liberty has been so many Ages exercised, without drawing after it those Inconveniencies which we now so justly complain of, they must be attributed either wholly to some other Cause, or to the Conjunction of some other Accidents to it, which have changed the Nature and Condition thereof: And that (having examined all Particulars which touch upon this Mat-

Matter) I can find to be no other, than the ſtrange and uncharitable Pride of thoſe Men, who having with juſt Cauſe vindicated their own Reaſon from the Tyranny of unneceſſary Bonds, endeavour nevertheleſs to lay them upon others; ſo that not the Uſe of ſuch Liberty, but the appropriating of it to ourſelves only, is the true, and, I think, the ſole Fountain of theſe Diſorders: For there cannot certainly in the World be found out, ſo mild and ſo peaceable a Doctrine, as that which permits a Difference in Beliefs; for what Occaſion can any Man take to begin a Quarrel, when both he himſelf is ſuffered quietly to enjoy his own Opinion, and his own Opinion is this, that he ought to ſuffer others to do the ſame. But if once Men entertain an Imagination, that every Thing is wicked and damnable which complies not with their own Senſe, and that in this vaſt Latitude of Probabilities (which is in all Kind of Diſquiſitions, but eſpecially thoſe of Religion, they being moſt obſcure and moſt indemonſtrable) there is none can lead one to Salvation, but the Path wherein he treads himſelf; we may ſee the evident and neceſſary Conſequence of eternal Troubles and Confuſions. For not only publick Charity will perſuade us to force Men to that wherein conſiſts their everlaſting Happineſs, or Calamity, if by no other Means we can induce Men to it (as without Injury we bind the Hands of a Man that would kill

himſelf) but alſo our private Intereſt, and that particular Care, which every Man owes to his own Poſterity, which, without Suppreſſion of all Hereſies, muſt run the Hazard of eternal Puniſhments, obliges us, by all Means, to endeavour the Extirpation of thoſe Weeds out of the Fields of our Neighbours, which would elſe ſo quickly overgrow our own: Whereas if we had either more of Charity to others, to believe ſome Errors (the inſeparable Companions of Human Nature) ought not to exclude Men from the Communion of the preſent Church, and the Hope of the future; or leſs of Self Flattery to think, that all Men grope in the Dark that light not their Candle at ours, we could not be ſo cruel in Perſecution of thoſe Faults to which God himſelf is ſo merciful, and from which we ourſelves are not exempt. I ſhall therefore conclude this Argument with a confident Aſſertion, That all the Miſeries which have followed the Variety of Opinions ſince the Reformation, have proceeded entirely from theſe two Miſtakes, The tying *Infallibility* to whatſoever we think Truth, and *Damnation* to whatſoever we think Error.

Another Abſurdity this Doctrine is accuſed of, that if we guide ourſelves wholly by the Light of Reaſon, we ſhall not only every one differ from every Body elſe, but every one frequently from himſelf, changing Religion almoſt

almoſt as often as our Habits, driven about perpetually by every Wind, and in all probability daſh'd by ſome one at laſt againſt a Rock; now a *Papiſt*, Tomorrow a *Lutheran*, next a *Calviniſt*; and ſo, like the *Heathen*, dedicate every Day in the Week to a ſeveral Deity. I muſt confeſs, Inconſtancy is one of the greateſt Weakneſſes of the weakeſt Sex, and much leſs to be endured in Man, eſpecially in that moſt weighty Affair of his whole Life, the Service of God; but I cannot conceive, that the Fear of this Scandal obliges us to a blind and inalterable Obſervance of thoſe Laws and Opinions, which either the Fate of our Birth and Education, or the Fortune of other Accidents have engaged us in; but we ought to make a ſerious and long Enquiry, whether they agree moſt with that Light of our Underſtanding, which God has infuſed into us for that End, according to the beſt Extent of thoſe Means, which are allowed by him to our Underſtandings for this Examination; and whatſoever we ſhall fix upon after this Conſideration, if it be duly made, will be upon ſuch Grounds, as are not likely every Day, and upon every new Argument to be removed from us: For if they be, it is a great, though not an infallible Sign, that the Enquiry was not made at firſt with ſo much Diligence as was poſſible: And when we have once carefully ſetled ourſelves in a Belief, though we happen to meet afterwards

with some new and unforeseen Difficulties, which may seem to evince the contrary, yet Reason will not presently advise us to a Change, because it finds itself unable to unty the Knot, but suspend a while and attempt again, and try a Thousand several Ways before it despair and yield up itself to the Argument; which remaining still after all this unconquerable, it will then turn back and consider whether if it alter now its Judgment, it be able to satisfy all those Defences which will be made for its former Opinion, and if it be overmatch'd by the Doubts on both Sides, rather chuse to continue as before, then make an Innovation without Advantage. This Rule being observ'd, we shall not be subject to the Inconvenience of frequent Changes, and yet as true it is, that we shall not be exempt from the Possibility of changing at all, which is neither requisite nor attainable in this Life; and if in this Permutation, after all our Industry and Humility therein, it shall be our ill Fortune to give away a Truth for a Falshood, it will be (as killing a Man against our Will is no Murther, at the worst but an Error by Chance-Medly, and will both find (I had almost said claim) Mercy from God, and deserve Pity from Men. We know very well that every Man's Body is in so perpetual a Flux, that about the Space of seven Years, renders him wholly and entirely another corporeal Substance from what he

he was before, the whole Mass both of Accidents and Matter being thrust away by the continual Succession of new ones: and yet because the Soul remains still the same, and retains all the while the same Power and uninterrupted Government over the whole Succession, we justly esteem it the same Person; nay every Part of him to be always so truly the same, that at any Time of his Life he may say, With these Eyes I shall behold my Saviour, though the Accidents and very Matter of them be so often changed. Such an Identity as this is requisite to a Man's Faith: He may now be fully a Papist, and seven Years hence fully a Protestant, and yet his Faith still remains the same, because it is all the while actuated and moved by the same Soul of Faith, which is Conscience; which if he preserve inviolably, both when he was a Papist, and when he is a Protestant, he may truly say, with this very Faith I shall behold my Saviour.

But suppose this so exalted Guide of yours, your own Conscience, should direct you to forsake your Christian Belief; for which the Devil does not want such pleasant Colours and specious Fallacies, as may possibly deceive even a good Understanding?

Before

Before I anſwer this Objection, I deſire to know of him that makes it, what it is (for ſomething it muſt be) which he places in the ſame Eccleſiaſtical Superiority that I do Reaſon? The private Spirit? What if that ſhould perſuade him to this Apoſtacy? It cannot. Not indeed if it be true; but the ſame Condition will make Reaſon as infallible as that; and I may as well judge of the Truth of the one, as you of the other.

What is it then you will truſt your Soul with, in this important Buſineſs? Is it the Authority of Men? Theſe verily may lead you into Error, and it is not impoſſible, into the greateſt and worſt of all, which is the Deſertion of Chriſt himſelf: Not that this is likely to happen, neither more probable is it, that our Reaſon ſhould ſo far miſguide us. But, alas! in this Affair of ſo vaſt and ſo eternal Conſequence, what Security can we aſſume, whilſt there remains a Poſſibility of Miſcarriage? And this Poſſibility is evident. For let us conſider it in a Council; which if there be any Aſſurance in the Number of Men, is that where moſt probably it may be found. I will not here reckon up the many Errors which great and famous Councils have fallen into themſelves, and labour'd to eſtabliſh in others, they are many and notorious. But certainly if a Council could take away the Satis-

Satisfaction of Christ's Death, and Divinity of his Person (as was done by that great one of the *Arians* which condemned *Athanasius*, not without the Approbation of the Pope and the whole World besides) a Council has already done that Thing, which you affirm impossible for it to do. For they who believed Christ to come into the World as an Example and Pattern only of Holiness, are no more to be call'd *Christians*, than *Abrahamists* or *Davidists*. If you will here contend, that even these Men deserted not wholly *Christianity*, as a Man may do by the Impulsion of his own private Reason, yet certainly you will confess, that they who fell so far into Error, might as well have sunk deeper, and exalted some other Prophet above Christ, as well as make Christ to be but a Prophet: And this Possibility of Error (even in so high a Degree) we shall find in the Nature and very Elements of a Council; for if any one Member of it may be a Heathen or Atheist in Opinion (as the Lives of many Popes, and the Speeches of some, declare that they themselves have been) why not two, not three, not more, not the Major Part, that is, the Whole Council? From the Sanctions of the *Nicene* Council, which establish'd the Worship of Images, how easy a Step was there made for the next; to the Introduction of a full, undisguis'd and heathenish Idolatry, which we must not say could not, because by

by the Mercy of God it did not happen? And I verily believe if God had not ſtirr'd up ſome Perſons of Excellent Abilities and Worthy Spirits (for ſuch ſure they were, though not exempt from human Weaknesſes) to examine by the Rules of their own Reaſons, thoſe Follies and dangerous Errors in Religion, which partly by the Intereſt, partly by the Ignorance of Men, and inſenſible Advances of ill Cuſtom, were blindly embraced by the whole World; if theſe Men, I ſay, had not diſcover'd the paſt Errors, and by that Means made their Adverſaries more cautious not to fall into any new ones, the World through the Adoration of Saints and Images, and the boundleſs Increaſe of vain and ſuperſtitious Ceremonies, would have paſt before this Time, to its old and abominable Worſhip of ſeveral Deities, and to a Religion overwhelm'd, if not with the ſame, yet with as many and as vain Impieties. It remains therefore, that you put your Confidence rather in the Traditions of the former, than the Commands of the preſent Church; but what thoſe were, you muſt either truſt ſome Number of Men preſent, which is not without the Poſſibility of being miſguided; or your own Search and Diligence, which is to fall into that Opinion which you condemn in me. And truly they who build their Belief wholly upon the Authority of paſt or preſent Ages, if they look upon all the Conſequences of that Opinion,

are

are in much greater Danger of being drawn from the Chriſtian Faith, than thoſe who remit the Judgment of theſe Things to their own Reaſon: For ever ſince the Beginning of the Chriſtian Belief, there has been the Authority of above an hundred to one againſt it; and this Authority backed and ſtrengthened with the univerſal Agreement of more than Three thouſand Years before it. But on the contrary, if we weigh impartially the Motives and Arguments which every Religion can produce in its own Defence; Reaſon itſelf will find more and much greater for the Chriſtian, than it can for any other Belief whatſoever: And I am very confident, that no Man ever from a Chriſtian, became a *Turk* or a *Jew*, becauſe his Reaſon told him that was a better Religion; but becauſe either Fear of Puniſhment, or Hope of Reward, or ſome other ſiniſter Cauſe, perſuaded his Reaſon, that the worſt Religion in itſelf, would be the better to him upon thoſe Conditions.

Now all thoſe Arguments by which ſome Men have laboured to prove, that our *Guide* in Spiritual Matters ought to be *Infallible*, will, though they be granted for true, as I believe in ſome Senſe they are, will not at all diſpoſſeſs Reaſon of this Authority, which we have declared to be her due. For the *Infallibility* of a *Guide* I conceive to be only this, That it cannot fail to bring us to that

End, for which we chose to be guided by it; and if to this End there happen to be a Thousand several Ways, it is a Guide no less infallible as to the End, if it lead us through a long, an unpleasant, and obscure Tract, than if it conduct us by a short, a delightful, and an open Road: For not the Goodness of the Passage, but Certainty of not missing the End, is that which constitutes this Kind of *Infallibility*. And truly every Man's particular Reason, if well followed (for whatsoever Guide you pitch upon, whether Scripture, Spirit, Church past or present, or any Thing else imaginable, must have that Condition annex'd, or else it will become unprofitable) will infallibly carry him at last, though, perhaps, through many tedious and troublesome Wandrings, to his eternal Happiness, if it be followed (for that Condition cannot be repeated too often) with Constancy, Diligence, and Sobriety.

This Doctrine sets the great Gate of Heaven so wide open, that it will displease those Men, who with an envious Kind of Pride think it more Honour to enter in with a few at a narrow Wicket. But I truly, out of an humble Consideration of my own Weakness, and the general Imbecillity of Human Nature, should still lament and tremble, that the Entrances to Heaven are so few and so difficult, though they were yet far more and much easier than

than this Opinion makes them. There are enough Obſtructions from the Frailty of our Fleſh, the Subtilty of the Devil, the Tyranny of our Paſſions, and the perverſe Crookedneſs of our corrupted Wills, without the Additions of any more from the Imperfections of our Intellect. Sufficient is the Danger we run, in not performing thoſe Duties which we underſtand aright, without making our Miſunderſtandings damnable, and condemning that as a Guilt, which is to be pitied as a Misfortune. What then? Shall we believe *Turks*, *Jews*, *Heathens*, *Atheiſts* themſelves (if there be any ſuch) in an equal Poſſibility of Salvation, with the unerring Chriſtian? Shall we ſave all Beaſts of what Kind ſoever, clean or unclean, in that myſtical Ark, the Church of God? Certainly, in the two contrary Exceſſes of Belief in this Matter, that on the Side of Mercy hath the Appearance of greater Safety; and I had rather think with *Origen*, *That the Devils themſelves, by the exceſſive Kindneſs of their Judge, ſhall at laſt be exempted from Damnation, than that he himſelf ſhall be damn'd for that Opinion.* But as to this their Objection; I believe firſt, That Reaſon itſelf will declare to every Man in the World, that he ought to adhere to the *Chriſtian*, rather than to any other Religion whatſoever, if all Things be propounded to him in a clear and impartial Manner; and this whoſoever ſhall deny, I dare confidently

affirm, it is impoſſible for him to be a Chriſtian. But becauſe there are a thouſand Accidents, which hinder the greateſt Part of the World from the Advantages of ſo fair a Propoſal, hence it comes to paſs, that ſo ſmall a Part of Mankind hath ſubmitted to the Obedience of the Chriſtian Faith: Now to condemn all thoſe Millions of Perſons (many Millions for one that is to be ſaved) is ſo wild an Uncharitableneſs, that few have been ſo barbarouſly ſevere, as to be guilty of it: And therefore thoſe whoſe Ignorance in theſe Matters hath been invincible, they left to the Hands of God, without declaring a definitive Opinion either of their Safety or Perdition. Now if we conſider rightly, what Ignorance is to be accounted invincible, we ſhall by this Means reſtore the greateſt Part of Mankind into a hopeful and comfortable Condition; and none even amongſt the worſt Religions, will be left to a certain Ruin, but ſuch whoſe Conſciences have been neglected or forced aſide by thoſe who ought to have been guided by them; and ſuch who can have no Plea againſt the Rigour of their Sentence, becauſe they deſerted themſelves as well as God: And the Diſobedience of Men to their own Conſcience is not only in Things of Practice, but alſo of Belief and Speculation, though not in ſo evident and immediate a Manner, by ſuffering themſelves to be deceived by the

inſenſible

insensible Operations of Interest and Prejudice.

Nor does it follow from hence, that Christ is not the only Source and Cause of eternal Felicity; for I acknowlege there is no other Name under Heaven by which Men can hope for Salvation. But I may very well believe withal, that there are secret and wonderful Ways, by which God may be pleased to apply his Merits to Mankind, besides those direct, open, and ordinary ones of *Baptism* and *Confession*; which I have only advanc'd briefly in this Place, being a Matter that will require a more ample and particular Examination. Now concerning the Salvation of all Sorts of Christians, except their Lives disagree from their Doctrines (which is likewise a Disobedience to their Reason) I know not why I should be terrify'd out of my Charity by any *Anathema* whatsoever that shall proceed from the Mouth of Man. For I cannot see how any but God himself can certainly know that any Man is an Heretick, since it is only he who can discern by what close and unlawful Means he corrupts his Understanding, and hardens his own Will to the obstinate Belief of any Error; for without that Obstinacy there is no Heresy, and without the perfect Sight of the whole Contexture of a Man's Thoughts and Actions, there is no Knowledge of such an Obstinacy: And therefore

fore when the Church declares any Opinion to be Herefy, it is to be accepted as if the Law ſhould ſay, *Whoſoever kills a Man is a Murtherer*, which is a Sentence not abſolute but to be qualified with Circumſtances: Even ſo the Church pronounces, *Whoſoever holds this Doctrine is an Heretick*, with an evident Reſervation of ſome Circumſtances in the Meaning thereof; for no Man can imagine that the Sentence includes thoſe who never ſhall hear of it; not no more, ſay I, thoſe, who though they hear of it, yet cannot by any Means bring their Conſcience to the Aſſent. For to obey in Matters of Belief, without being able to believe the Thing commanded, is no leſs, and ſeems more a Contradiction, than ſimply to obey without Knowledge of a Command.

Thus much briefly concerning *Hereſy*, which indeed is a Subject worthy a Treatiſe by itſelf. But this will not ſuffice, unleſs we can alſo clear ourſelves from the Imputation of *Schiſm*, the ordinary railing Word in all Controverſies, and a Slander which is often fatal in making, where falſly accuſes, a Sepration; of which they are truly guilty (the Word itſelf bearing Witneſs againſt them) who break the precious Unity of the Chriſtian Church: But, that is done not ſo much by them who differ in Opinions, as by them who will not allow of ſuch a Difference. Who knows,

knows, whether that God who liked beſt that no Mens Bodies ſhould have the ſame Complexion, no Mens Faces the ſame Figures, no Hands the ſame Lines, no Voices the ſame Sounds, nay not ſo much but their Motions and Geſtures ſhould be diſtinguiſhable, has not likewiſe beſt pleaſed himſelf with no leſs Variety in the Parts of Men that are immaterial, and even in the moſt immaterial Actions of thoſe Parts, which is the Worſhip and Adoration of a Deity? Does God gain any Thing by our Devotions? Does he receive Hurt from one Kind of Worſhip, and Advantage by another? Is he pleaſed with any Smell in the Sacrifice, beſides that of Obedience? And can a plain, uniform, unalterable Obedience be expected, without Commands of the ſame Nature? Without Doubt, he who gave Rules, which might accept of ſo many ſeveral Interpretations, when he might have made them as plain to all in one Senſe, as they ſeem now to every Man in his own, is likewiſe well contented, that they ſhall be interpreted ſeverally: And as the Divines confeſs, that the ſame Words of Scripture admit of a Literal, Typical, Anagogical Senſe, and that all thoſe Senſes are both true and intended by the Holy Ghoſt, that Spirit of Unity that writ them; ſo, I ſay, the Commands of God, concerning Religion, are equally obeyed and fulfilled by all the various Kinds of Obedience, which the Conſciences of Men conceive

ceive themſelves bound to pay unto them. As well the Mud by growing hard, as the Wax by melting over the Sun; nor is it leſs glorified by one than by the other: nor are thoſe Diverſities of Powers in the Sun, but of Capabilities in the Object that receives him: Even ſo Faith is ſtill properly one, though, according to the diverſe Receptions of it, it produce not only diverſe, but contrary Effects. It is not unobſervable, that the Unity of the Church of God is compared not to the Unity of one Man, but of a Man and Woman joined in Marriage; ſo the *Church* in general is one with *Chriſt*; ſo the *Church Militant* with the *Triumphant*; and ſo every *particular Man* with the *Church Militant*: Now this *Unity* is of one Part more weak, more infirm, more ignoble than the other; and the *Female Part* in the Similitude, is the erring Part in the Church itſelf; and as that by the Bond of *Love*, ſo this by the Bond of *Charity* is to be accounted one and the ſame with the other. Can any Thing be more irrational, than to ſay, That a Foot, when it hath the Gout, or a Hand, when it ſhakes with the Palſey, or a Head, when it aches, ceaſes to be a Part of the Body? Sound or ſick, great or little, well, or ill ſhaped, are outward Conſiderations to the Nature of a Member; if it be informed by the ſame Soul, it requires no other Condition to make it ſuch: Nor can you make this Soul which is re-

required of such Necessity to give it Life, to be a full and entire Agreement in all Points of Faith, of one Member with another; for then in Matters of Belief you make no Distinction betwixt Sickness and Death, and the least Indisposition of Health is a total Corruption. Men of the contrary Opinion (I foresee) cannot chuse but say here, That in dangerous and infectious Diseases cut off the affected Member to save the rest; and that he who in a Gangreen spares the Patient, is the most hard-hearted and unmerciful Physician: And truly, if Errors in Belief draw so ill a Tail after them as the Devils and Damnation; if they be to be esteemed Gangreens, as well in Respect of their Mortality, as their spreading and infectious Nature; not only Prudence but Charity itself will put a Sword into our Hands to cut them off. But, alas! these Diseases are not so deadly, as the Physicians of the Soul would make them, for the exalting of their own Reputation; and he that would presently lop off an Arm, if the Gangreen be moving in it, would not, I hope, prescribe the same Remedy, if it be but infected with an Itch: Both Evils would extend themselves over the whole Body, but the one to the perpetual Destruction of the Being, the other only to the temporary Loss of the Beauty and Quiet of it; and therefore we rather patiently endure the Trouble and Vexation of continual Scratching (which is the true

Metaphor for the Controverſies of Eccleſiaſtical Writers) with the Loathſomneſs and Deformity of ſo many Sores, than take away a Member which may poſſibly hereafter recover its former Health and Comelineſs, and is even without them, of great and neceſſary Uſes to the whole Body.

Now as for thoſe Men, who accuſe us of Pride and Vanity for attributing ſo much to our own Reaſon, making Preſumption and Self Flattery the Fountain of this Opinion; it is a Scandal ſo falſe and ſo ridiculous, that without much Humility I ſhould diſdain to anſwer it. Are thoſe to be accounted proud and tyrannical, who being governed by their own Reaſon, are content that all others ſhould enjoy the ſame Liberty, or thoſe who whilſt they deny that they themſelves are ruled by their own Underſtandings, would nevertheleſs have all others to ſubmit to it? Is it the Voice of Pride to acknowledge, That they who differ from me may poſſibly be in the Right, or if they miſtake, may do it without Ruin, or to ſay, Whoſoever is not of my Opinion is in the Wrong, and whoſoever is in the Wrong is eternally to periſh for his Error? It is the Cuſtom of Preſumption to be ready to lay down an Opinion once entertained (which is almoſt as great a Martyrdom, as laying down our Lives for the Truth's Sake) when Cauſe

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ſhall appear for ſo doing; or by claiming to ourſelves the Infalli ility of our Party (for he is infallible himſelf who agrees with them that are ſo) to harden ourſelves into a neceſſary Opiniaſtrete.

Theſe are the common Objections againſt this good-natur'd and gentle Doctrine: But Mr. *Hobbs*, according to his extraordinary Wit, has found out an odd, and extraordinary Argument. For in his Firſt Chapter of Religion, in the State of God's natural Empire, making every City the ſupreme Judge in Matters that belong to God's Worſhip, and to which we ought to render an entire Obedience, ſays thus; "Otherwiſe all abſurd Opinions of the Nature of God, and "all ridiculous Ceremonies which have been "admitted by any Nations, would be ſeen "at once in the ſame City, by which it "would happen, that every particular Perſon would believe all others to * blaſpheme, or irreverently to behave himſelf "towards God; ſo that it could be ſaid of "no Man, that he worſhipp'd God; becauſe "no Man worſhips God (that is, honours "him externally) but he who does thoſe "Things by which he may appear to others "to honour him."

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* *Contumelia afficere.*

But, methinks, if this be true, the ſeveral unappealable Tribunals which are ſet up by Mr. *Hobbs* in ſeveral Cities or Commonwealths, are as well deſtroyed by it, as thoſe which are placed by us in every Man's Breaſt; for ſeveral Cities appointing ſeveral Kinds of Worſhip or Honour, conſiſting in the Opinion not of the Worſhipper or Honourer himſelf, but of the Witneſſes and Spectators of the Worſhip or Honour; now if he ſay, That when a whole Commonwealth has but one Sort of Worſhip, none will be Witneſſes or Spectators of it, but thoſe who believe it honourable; firſt, as much Scandal from the Report, as from the Sight of it; and beſides, the ſame, I ſay, will happen, if there were an hundred Religions in one City; for ſtill their religious Congregations were to be made up of Men of the ſame Opinions: Again, Thoſe who deny that a Commonwealth ought to enforce an Unity of Worſhip upon all its Subjects, will likewiſe as much deny, that Men ought to think thoſe Worſhips diſhonourable which are not practiſed by themſelves: and if he ſay, there is no hindering of this latter, he muſt needs pardon me if I cannot believe that impoſſible, which has been in the World (even in a more ridiculous Variety than is at preſent, at leaſt in our Parts) for ſo many Ages, and which is now exerciſed in ſome Places: And if ignorant or malicious

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Phyſicians in this violent Fever, did not apply new Heats inſtead of Juleps, they might by Writing, Diſputing, Preaching, living Charitably (which is all the former) reduce the World in a ſhort Time to its ancient, healthful, and natural Temper. Laſtly, (to ſtrike at the Root of this Argument) it is falſe, that the Worſhip or Honour of God conſiſts in the Opinion of others; if it did, Idolatry, for Four Thouſand Years, had been the beſt, nay, the only Religion; and if I were now in the South Continent (where I ſuppoſe I ſhould be the only Chriſtian) I ought not to abſtain from the Chriſtian Worſhip of God (no, nor to hide or diſguiſe it) for Fear leſt the Wonder, Contempt and Mockery of Infidels, ſhould on a ſudden (I know not how) convert it into Sin and Blaſphemy. True it is, that in Honour paid from Men to Men, Cuſtom, Conſent, and Acknowledgment, makes up the Buſineſs, and an Honour contrary to the Uſe of the Place is counted an Affront; as to put off the Hat would be in the Eaſt, and in the Weſt to keep it on before Princes. But the Reaſon of this is, becauſe Men who are not able to ſearch into the Hearts, muſt be govern'd in their Judgment of them by the exterior Actions, and the Meaſure or Standard of thoſe is Cuſtom; but with God it is quite otherwiſe: He beholds and judges the very Thoughts of Men, which are the Fountains of

of his Actions, ſo much more fully and plainly, than we do the Actions themſelves, that he needs not make a ſecond, a mediate, a ſyllogiſtical Judgment of the Reality of Mens Worſhip, from the external, circumſtantial, and only probable Teſtimonies of their outward Behaviours. And truly, if we put the Caſe amongſt Men, methinks a great *Roman* Emperor that calls himſelf Maſter of the World, ſhould delight to prove himſelf to be ſo, from the Variety of Homages, Tribute, and Worſhip, which he receives from ſeveral Nations; and no more refuſe to be honour'd in ſeveral Faſhions, than he would to be prais'd in ſeveral Languages. He would be glad, perhaps, to eſtabliſh the *Latin* Tongue, and make that the Speech of all Countries, but finding that Deſign to be impoſſible, would at leaſt pardon that Diverſity which agrees and conſents in his own Glory. Truly, if Men could caſt away ſo much Paſſion, as to make but true Compariſons, they would find no more Hurt from the Uſe of different Ceremonies, than of different Tongues in the ſame City; and we might be as well allowed to ſerve God after the *Engliſh* Manner, as to ſpeak *Engliſh* in the *Spaniſh* Dominions. As Words are the Images of our Thoughts, ſo our Thoughts are of the Things themſelves: And as well may differing Thoughts truly repreſent the Worſhip of one God, and of his Son Chriſt *Jeſus*,

Jesus, as differing Words can represent the same Thought: And this the *Roman* Church seems to acknowledge, which does not think sufficient Unity in God's Service to be retained, with the Allowance of more than of one Language, and for Preservation of fantastical Identity, teaches her Sons first to think, and afterwards to speak they know not what. They say first, Our Error is the same with that of the *Greeks*, which is taxed by Saint *Paul* to the *Corinthians*; That *they sought after Wisdom*, but *that the World by Wisdom knew not God*; That *the Wisdom of the Wise was destroyed, and the Understanding of the Prudent brought to nothing*; that it *was made Foolishness*, nay, it *was confounded by the foolish Things of the World*. And against this Wisdom many excellent Things are spoken in the Beginning of that Epistle, and it is strucken down (as Saint *Paul* was himself) by a greater Light of Divine Truth, which came from God for that very Purpose, to amaze and confound it first, and then to convert it. But if we mark it well, we shall observe, that under this Name of *Wisdom*, which is arraigned, condemned, nay, and executed here, (for it is brought to nothing) is not signified *Human Reason*, but that which among the *Greeks* at that Time was falsly and blindly esteemed to be so: As in the Laws against Magick, not that which is truly, but that which is

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falſly called ſo, is only condemned. And therefore Saint *Paul* names it the *Wiſdom of Words*; *the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom*; and the *Wiſdom after the Fleſh*; and the *Wiſdom of the Princes of the World*. By which three Names are plainly (methinks) deſcribed, the three great Subornerſ and Corrupters of *Human Reaſon* (and not at all itſelf) the Deſire of Reputation, of Pleaſure, and Profit. By the firſt we forſake the Truth to make Demonſtrations of our Wit and Eloquence: By the Second to compaſs thoſe carnal and worldly Pleaſures, which our own true Reaſon does not allow of, and therefore we will not allow of it: (as *Henry* the Eighth ſeems to have left the Pope, becauſe he refuſed to diſpence with his Luſts, and to call that Matrimony, which was, indeed, Adultery:) And by the third, to comply with the Intereſt of States and Princes, and either willingly deceiving ourſelves with the Errors of our Governors, or deceiving others with a Deſire to govern them. And theſe three (at leaſt the two latter) Cauſes of Error in the Underſtanding, may be the Reaſon contained with Truth in the Parable concerning which is ſtrongeſt. That that which falſly ſeemed to be *Human Reaſon*, and not that which truly is ſo, is accuſed by Saint *Paul*, appears yet more plainly, where he ſays, That *God hath choſen the Things which are not, to confound the Things which are*: Where *the Things*

Things which are not can ſignify nothing elſe, but the Things which are eſteemed as nothing, that is neither of Value in themſelves, nor of Power to produce any Effects. True it is, that the beſt and trueſt *Human Reaſon* could not have found out of itſelf, that *Wiſdom of God in a Myſtery, even that hidden Wiſdom which God ordained before the World*, which is the Myſtery of Chriſt *Jeſus*; but it was neceſſary it ſhould firſt be revealed by that Spirit, which can only ſearch and diſcover the deep Things of God. But as ſoon as the Spirit had reveal'd it (which it did by Miracles, by fulfilling of Propheſies and many other Means of Power and Demonſtration) even *Human Reaſon* was able to behold and to confeſs it; not that *Grace* had alter'd the Eyeſight of *Human Reaſon*, but that it had drawn the Object nearer to it. And till the Object was brought ſo nigh, the Wiſdom of Man did as ſafely not diſcern it, as it does not now the new State of Things, which ſhall be revealed at the Second coming. And whereas they oppoſe againſt this the Saying of the Apoſtle, That *the Natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned*: The Word *Natural*, I take to be a very ill Tranſlation, and conceive it ought to be render'd the *Senſual Man*, for ſuch ψυχικὸς in

the *Greek*, and *animalis* in the *Latin*; ψυχὴ many Times ſignifying the *lower* and *ſenſitive* Part of the Soul, in Diſtinction to νοῦς, which is the *upper* or *rational*, as *anima* is oppos'd to *animus*, and both ſometimes to *mens*. So that the Meaning is, that whilſt a Man's Reaſon is ſeduced by his Appetites and Paſſions, it is an unfit Judge of Spiritual Matters, neither can be Umpire for a Peace, having joined itſelf to the Party of thoſe Things, which are in perpetual Warfare againſt the Spirit. But they ſay this *Authority* which we aſcribe to Reaſon, is ſtrangely different from that *Captivity* which Saint *Paul* ſubjects it to, when he ſays, *Caſting down Reaſonings, and every high Thing that exalts itſelf againſt the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt.* And what Captivity, ſay they, can there be, whilſt we are only guided by the Motions of our own Underſtanding? All which ſignifies no more, but that Saint *Paul* relates (in Vindication of his own juſt Greatneſs againſt the Calumnies of ſome that deſpiſed his Perſon, eſpecially as weak and rude of Speech) how he had confuted thoſe Perſons that oppoſed themſelves by Reaſonings againſt the Doctrine of Chriſt; and whereas their Underſtandings before were enſlaved and captivated to the Deſires of the ſenſual Soul (for which he calls them in another Place *Beaſts at Epheſus*) which hindered them,

them from the Obedience of Chriſt, he freed them from their cruel Bondage, by caſting down all their ſtrong Holds, and breaking the Chains of their fallacious Reaſonings, and brought them into another Captivity by Right of Conqueſt, but ſuch an one where the Yoaks are light and the Burthens eaſy, that is, by true Reaſon he overcame and captivated their falſe ones.

And from this Example, I deſire thoſe who would have our Underſtandings captivated, to convince us firſt by theirs that they ought to be ſo, and not to think to enſlave our Reaſons, till they firſt overcome them; which when they have done, then they will loſe what they contend for; For by our Reaſons being guided, conquered, and enſlaved, theirs are become Guides, Conquerors, and Maſters. So that it will appear at laſt impoſſible for *Human Reaſon* to loſe any Thing in one Place, without gaining as much in ſome other.

They who follow the Apprehenſion of a Viſion or Revelation extrinſically coming into their Souls, if it happen that that extrinſical Light come from the *Father of Lights*, as the Pillar of Fire did which led the *Iſraelites*, they muſt needs be guided rightly; but if it chance to be an *ignis fatuus* (a Flame driven about, as Men commonly believe, by

malicious Spirits) the Errors which it leads them into become unpardonable; for what Plea can they make for Mercy, since there is no Command, nor no Counsel can be alledged for the trusting of themselves to that Stranger, which they can neither know from whence he comes, nor whither he designs to go. The like happens if we obey Authority: For if that Authority prescribe Truth, we have good Fortune in our Obedience, and merely good Fortune: But if it draw us into Errors, we have nothing to say for our Excuse, because we have nothing to alledge for our Obedience to that Authority: So *Eve* pleaded the Authority of the Serpent, but both were punished: So *Adam*, with more Appearance of Innocency, *the Woman that thou gavest me for an Helper bad me eat*, and accordingly I did; but to him too a Curse is pronounced, because he believed that which was figuratively one with him (as Members of the Church pretend to do the Church) rather than that which was most certainly and singly one with him, which was his own Reason. Thus the best that can be made of these Mens Opinions is, that after they have blindfolded themselves, amongst the many Doors where they may enter, there is one which will lead them to Heaven; which if they miss, it will be asked, not why you enter'd not there, but why by blinding your own Eyes did you put yourself into a greater

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Probability of not finding, than of lighting upon the true Paſſage. Now contrarywiſe, thoſe who commit themſelves to the Guidance of their own Underſtanding, if they do commit themſelves *wholly* to it, are as ſafe on the Left Hand as on the Right, as ſecure of Happineſs in their Errors, as others are, who are otherwiſe guided, even in the Truths which they happen to fall into. For there is no Danger of periſhing but from Diſobedience, without which every Man may often err, the Commandment of God being not to find out Truth (eſpecially every particular one) but to endeavour the finding it: He commands no more but to *ſearch, and ye ſhall find*, ſays he, not every particular Truth, for Experience teaches us that cannot be the Interpretation: But whether you find or no the Truth which you ſearch for, you ſhall find the Reward of Searching, which is Happineſs: Now he that bids you ſearch, is cruel and barbarous in his Mockery, if he knows you have no Power or Faculty ſo to ſearch as he commands you: There is therefore in Man a natural Ability of ſearching Spiritual Truths, and that can be nothing elſe but his Underſtanding; neither to any Thing elſe can the Command be directed, ſince all Things elſe are without us, and may ſerve for Helps and Directions in our Search, but cannot be our Search itſelf: Secondly, becauſe we lay the blaſphemous Ac-

Accuſation of Injuſtice upon God, if he puniſh us for an Error which we could not avoid; and all Errors are ſuch which we fall into after a full and mature Search for the Truth, according to the beſt Means repreſented to our Underſtanding; ſo that as the Liberty of our Will, and the Poſſibility we have of doing the contrary, makes us ſuffer juſtly for evil Actions, ſo the Poſſibility our Underſtanding had to have diſcover'd and entertained the Truth, renders us liable to Condemnation for ill Beliefs. Thirdly, We ought not to believe Errors in Faith to be damnable, becauſe this Opinion is ſo wildly uncharitable, that it ſtrikes out Ten Thouſand Millions out of the Book of Life, for each ſingle Name that it leaves in it: So immeaſurably vaſt, if we conſider the whole World, and all the Ages of it) is the Number of thoſe who have lived and died in great, high, and manifeſt Errors (manifeſt I mean to us, for they were not ſo to them) above thoſe that have been ſo happy as to find and to embrace the Truth. Fourthly, We ought not to teach Men, that any Errors in Belief overthrow our Hopes of Salvation, unleſs we could likewiſe give them a Catalogue of thoſe Errors which do ſo; it being confeſt that all do not, becauſe theſe muſt neceſſarily put all conſidering Men into a Doubt, or rather Deſpair of their own Salvation: For what Quiet or Repoſe can our Conſcience take, whilſt

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we know ourſelves to be in many Errors (the Eſtate of a Traveller being uncapable of an Exemption from them) and believe that ſome Errors without knowing which, or how many, do exclude Men from a Poſſibility of entring into Heaven. Fifthly, Becauſe in this Caſe we cannot know our Fault, and therefore have no Means of repenting of it: Now God enjoining Men Repentance, and promiſing Pardon thereupon for all Sins whatſoever, preſcribes ſuch a Phyſick as is impoſſible to be taken; for Repentance preſuppoſes Knowledge of the Fault, and Knowledge of a Fault does not conſiſt with an Error of the Underſtanding, for we cannot apprehend the Thing ſo, and yet be ſorry that we are miſtaken. Sixthly, The great Probability and Appearance of Truth on all Sides, even the erring ones, ought to make us believe, that God will not puniſh thoſe who err: If that be probable, which all, or moſt Men, or many, or the moſt Wiſe, or ſome wiſe Men receive for Truth; What Doctrine is there, which in the whole Compaſs of Religions may not paſs for probable, and what Cauſe have we to condemn the Underſtanding of any Man, in a Thing which he is drawn by Probabilities to aſſent to? I cannot poſſibly conceive it agreeable to the Goodneſs of the Divine Nature, ſo to have hidden and involved, and almoſt diſguiſed the Truth from us, if he had intended to have cenſured the

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missing of it, with so heavy a Sentence as that of eternal Ruin; especially seeing there is but one true Way for one hundred false ones, and no certain Mark set upon the Entry of that one, to distinguish it from the others. And let this suffice to be said upon the first Argument, to induce us to commit ourselves wholly to our Reason in the Search of Divine and Religious Verities, which is drawn from the Certainty of Safety this Way, and the great Hazard of it any other.

Secondly, As in visible Objects we receive confidently, and rest in the Report of the Sight, because Nature hath ordained and accommodated it accordingly for that Purpose, without Appeal from it either to other Senses, or to Revelations, or the Eyes of other Men: And as we do the like in all other Operations of the Sense, and all other Faculties of the Soul; so ought we as entirely and absolutely to resign our Belief to the Dictates of our own Understanding in Things intelligible, which are as properly and naturally the Object thereof, as Things visible are of the Eyesight; and we might as well say, we will trust our Eyes in green, and white, and black, but not in red or yellow Colours, as affirm that our Reason must guide us in the Contemplation of Nature, the Search of Arts, the Government of Publick Societies, and the Regulation of Mens Lives as far as the Bounds of Morality,

ty, but that it is not at all to be followed or obeyed in Matters that concern Religion; thoſe two being intelligible Truths, yea the chief, and therefore moſt to be ſearch'd, and a Part of the Underſtandings object as much or rather more than any other. Now as the Credit of the Sight is not at all to be diſparaged, becauſe ſome Men have the Jaundice which paints every Thing yellow, ſome look through blue Spectacles which repreſent all Things to them under the ſame Colour, and ſome through divers *Mediums* which makes the ſtraight Staff appear crooked, ſome are ſhort-ſighted and take Men for Trees at a Diſtance; ſo, I ſay, the Miſtakes which Reaſon by accidental Diſturbances leads ſome Men into, is not a ſufficient Argument for others to refuſe to be guided by it.

If it be objected, that the Sight, though it be ſubject to ſome particular Impediments, yet is generally by its own Nature much more certain and exact in the Judgment of Colours, than the Underſtanding can ever be made (even without accidental Hinderances) in the Knowledge of Things Spiritual. I anſwer, That if ſuch things be the proper Object of ſuch a Faculty, we are herein to be govern'd by the Dictates of it, without conſidering whether that Faculty be as quick and perfect as God could make it in Apprehenſion of its Object; neither ought we to give leſs Truſt

to our Understanding in supernatural Truths, because it is so much inferior to that of Angels, than we do to our Eyesight in Things visible, though it be so far short of that of Eagles. Certainly, they who remove the Cognizance of Divine Truths out of the Court of Reason, take away that which most properly and naturally falls under its Determination. For when God had Created all Things else, he thought the World imperfect as yet, whilst there was nothing made that could contemplate, thank, and worship the Maker of it; and therefore he Created Man, and this was the chief End of the Production of a Rational Soul, that by it they might consider the Things which they saw, and discourse and collect out of them the Things which they saw not, and both praise and love the Maker for and in them both; which is the whole Substance of Religion; for the Manners and Kinds of doing it are accidental. So then Religion appears to be the principal End of Man's Creation, and therefore, as if Horses be made for Burthen, they have a natural Ability given them wherewith to do it; if Birds to fly, they have a Faculty and Wings given them for that Purpose (because where an End is natural, the Means are so too); so if Religion be the End of Man as he is Partaker of a Rational Soul, that reasonable Soul hath some Power naturally placed in it for the Exercise, Judgment, and Choice of

of Religion, as far forth as is neceſſary to his own Happineſs, that is, to the attaining the End for which he was Created.

In the third Place, This Opinion is not only moſt ſafe and moſt natural for every Man in particular, but likewiſe moſt agreeable to the Good and Intereſt of Human Society; for all Wars of late Ages have been either really for Religion, or, at leaſt, that has been one of the chief Pretences; which if it were quite taken away, it would be difficult for thoſe Men who diſguiſe their Ambition with it, to draw the People into the Miſeries and Uncertainties either of a Civil or Foreign War. Now if this Doctrine were generally planted in the Minds of Men, both the Reality and Pretence of fighting for Religion were utterly cancelled; and though turbulent Minds would then either find or make ſome other Occaſion to diſturb their Neighbours, yet the Ill would neither be ſo frequent nor ſo cruel as it is at preſent. For who would quarrel for Religion, when this were made the main and general Ground of all Religions, *That every man ought quietly to enjoy his own.* True it is, that Unity in Religion would produce the ſame Effect; but, alas! both Reaſon and Experience teaches us, that the Hopes of that are vain and impoſſible; and though a *State* may ſometimes force all its Subjects to ſubmit to an outward Uniformity in all Things that

concern Divine Worſhip, yet they muſt know, that every publick Diſturbance in the Commonwealth, breaks all thoſe Bonds aſunder of diſſembled Obedience, and that ſuch Compulſions both beget and ripen all Diſorders.

Much might be ſpoken in this Matter, but not neceſſarily here, both becauſe I have ſaid ſomething of it before, in anſwering this Argument turn'd againſt this Opinion unhappily; and becauſe the Manner of eſtabliſhing this Liberty in a Commonwealth, will require a Diſcourſe entirely by itſelf.

The laſt Defence of this Cauſe, and which indeed needs not the Aſſiſtance of any other, ſhall be, becauſe (though Men deceive themſelves herein, and as it often happens, know not their own Opinions) it is impoſſible that ever any Man ſhould have been, is, or can hereafter be guided by any Thing elſe but his own *Reaſon*, as in other Things, ſo alſo in Matters of Religion; I ſay, impoſſible; for whatſoever Way we take, we ſhall find, that the laſt Anchor to which our Faith holds, the laſt Element into which it is reſolved (and therefore it is likewiſe compounded of the ſame) is only *Reaſon*. For when I ask, Why you believe any Myſtery of Faith? You will anſwer, perhaps, Becauſe the preſent Church commands you: If I proceed and ask, Why do you believe what the preſent Church commands?

mands? You will ſay, Becauſe the former Church teaches the ſame. Why do you believe the former Church? Becauſe God commands you ſo to do. Why do you believe that God commands it? Becauſe you find it in the Scripture. Why do you believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God? Becauſe they were confirmed by Miracles. Why do Miracles confirm that? Becauſe they are Works which can proceed from nothing but the abſolute and immediate Power of the Deity. Why ſo? Becauſe nothing contrary to, or above the Courſe of Nature, can be done by natural Agents; but Miracles are Effects contrary to, or above the Courſe of Nature; therefore they proceed from the Divine Operation. Thus you ſee Faith at laſt reſolv'd into a Syllogiſm, which is the proper Work of the Underſtanding. On the other Hand, if I demand, Why you do believe that any Miracles were done for the Confirmation of the Faith? Becauſe of the great and many Teſtimonies of the Truth thereof. Why do you believe thoſe Teſtimonies? Becauſe ſo many Perſons in ſo ſeveral Times and Places, with ſo ſeveral Intereſts, could never agree in being deceived, or to deceive. So that you reſt not at all in any Authority, but diſcourſe firſt what may be ſaid for or againſt the Validity of it, examine it punctually in all Circumſtances, and at laſt ſubmit to it upon ſome Syllogiſm, which is the only Law that binds

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our *Reason*. Two Things are to be considered in all Authority, before we obey or believe it; First, The Condition and Quality of the Persons who command or instruct; and Secondly, The true Interpretation of their Commands or Instructions. For the First, The Persons in Commanding must have a lawful Power derived to them, either from God, Nature, or Custom (which latter depends upon the two former). And in Instructing, must have either an absolute Infallibility, or else at least a Probability of not Erring. So that no Authority is obeyable or believable in itself without farther Examination: No not that of God himself; for the Strength of God's Authority depends upon that Syllogism, which proves that the Nature of God is such, that he can neither deceive nor be deceived. Now all this Examination is purely and entirely the Work of our Reason, by measuring a Particular and an Universal. Whatsoever hath such Conditions is to be obeyed or believed; but such Person or Persons hath such Conditions, therefore such Person or Persons are to be obeyed or believed: Neither does our Reason only prescribe Obedience and Belief to us, but also searches and establishes the Bounds of both, setting up some solid and apparent Notions, by which we know our *Ne plus ultra*. True it is, that some Men Obey, and some Men Believe, without considering that they make this Discourse; but that is only

only from Inadvertency, as Men often move their Bodies, without any particular exerted Thought of doing so.

Thus far then Authority wholly depends upon *Reason*. And much more in the *Second Condition*, which is the Interpretation of it: In which Business the Interposition of *Reason* is so necessary, that I shall omit either to prove or illustrate the Point.

Now as they who enslave themselves to Authority, make it the Rule and Guide of Faith, because that even the Belief that Scripture is the Law of God depends upon it, as truly it does (in my Opinion) upon the Tradition of Miracles; so, I say, That much rather *Reason* is to be accounted that Rule and that Guide we look for, because even Authority, upon which even Scripture itself depends, depends as much upon that; neither do we more believe the Scripture for Authority, than that very Authority for the Reason we think we have to do so. The *Samaritan* says, I have an infallible Rule, which is the *Books of Moses*, and only them. The *Jew* says, I cannot err, for I follow the *Old Testament*, which is infallible, and only that. The *Christian* assures himself of the Truth as long as he is guided by the *Evangelists* and *Apostles*, whose Writings are the infallible Dictates of the *Holy Ghost*. The *Turk* assumes

ſumes the ſame from the *Alcoran*; and the *Heathen* from *Oracles*, *Sybills Books*, and the like. What ſhall I do? None of all theſe Books can be believed by their own Light, for there are Things equally ſtrange in them all. Follow the Authority of the Church which cannot miſguide you. Moſt willingly: But again the ſame Difficulty returns in another Habit; for as every one cries, I follow theſe Books which are *infallible*, ſo he goes on too and ſays, I believe theſe Books to be ſo, becauſe our *Church* and our *Traditions* which are certainly the beſt Authority, aſſures us that they were written by *Divine Inſpiration*. Let the *Chriſtian* take heed of ſaying here, *But my Tradition is more Ancient and more Univerſal*, for in the firſt the *Jew* will overcome him, and in both the *Heathen*. I muſt in this Diverſity of Ways either ſtand ſtill, that is, ſuſpend abſolutely from the Belief of any Religion (which is almoſt impoſſible after the Belief that there is a God) or I muſt chuſe out of theſe. Now Election is a Work ſo proper to Reaſon, that it cannot be done by any Thing elſe; and therefore to be brought to a Neceſſity of an Election, is to be neceſſarily brought to ſubmit in Matters of Religion to the Determination of our Underſtanding: So that in Matters of Religion wherein there is Difference, I chuſe this Side rather than the other, becauſe my *Reaſon* bids me; and where there is no Difference,

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even there I am wholly guided by my *Reason*, because the uncontradicted Concurrence of the Parties, makes up a Syllogism to persuade (I say, to persuade only) my Belief. Briefly, I cannot *Believe* but by an Act of the *Will*, nor can I *will* but according to the Directions of the *Understanding*: so that they who say they follow Authority, or they follow Divine particular Revelation, or any Thing else imaginable, do it, because that agrees with their own Reason, and will quit the Party as soon as it does otherwise.

FINIS.